

Ruppert House
Bladensburg Road & N.Y. Ave.
Washington, D.C.

HABS No. D.C. - 6

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Washington, D.C.

Historic American Buildings Survey
Delos H. Smith, District Officer
1707 Eye St., N.W., Washington, D.C.

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THE RUPPERT HOUSE

Bladensburg Road and New York Avenue, N. E.
Washington, D. C.

Owner: United Brick Corporation.

Date of Erection: About 1800.

Architect: Not known.

Builder: Not known.

Present Condition: Poor.

Number of Stories: $1\frac{1}{2}$.

Materials of Construction: Frame, brick basement.

Other Existing Records: (See following pages).

Additional Data: (See following pages).

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The Ruppert house, claimed by the Ruppert family to be more than 150 years old, is situated on a commanding hill about a quarter of a mile back from the Bladensburg Road at New York Avenue. This would be about the intersection of 28th and R Streets if those streets were cut through. The house, on its elevation, has a panoramic view of the surrounding neighborhood and is approached by Ruppert Lane, once bordered by handsome trees, a few of which still remain.

This property has no street number nor has it ever had any place name known to record or memory. It was said to be very old and to have had a number of owners and occupants when purchased by Anton Ruppert, November 18, 1865 from John Diehl and his wife, of Adams County, Pennsylvania for \$8,200.00 (1)

Anton Ruppert, butcher, born in Darmstadt, Germany in 1834 came to America at 18 years of age and arrived at Washington in 1852 from which time he made this city his permanent home. He established his first slaughter house on the site of the present baseball park and following his marriage in 1857 to Miss Anastasia Schwing, lived at 11th and U Streets, N. W. until he purchased the place off Ruppert Lane where some of his children were born. The only survivor is John Ruppert of 5457 41st Street, N. W. from whom much of this data has been obtained, by personal interview.

Mr. Ruppert's farm of more than 23 acres was provided with a substantial frame house, Colonial style, of eight rooms. It is two stories with an attic and ample cellar, part of which is a well arranged wine cellar. Its foundation is of brick. The central hall opens onto a small portico. The pediment with its circular window gives light to a storeroom. The dormers have arched heads.

(1) The record of this transaction is in the office of the Recorder of Deeds. The property is designated as parcels 153/25 and 163/6 in Liber R M H 7-Folio 372.

According to Mr. Ruppert, his father not only added to the house when he bought it but from time to time as additional room was needed for a growing family. He also constructed his own slaughter house on the place and such other outbuildings as his business demanded. The old rambling house, which in the heyday of its busy life must have been the center of the generous hospitality of the household, has exclusive of the outside kitchen about fourteen rooms. To the rear and close to it is a small storage house with a high brick foundation. This once had a glass roof and was a hothouse for the cultivation of flowers for the personal pleasure of the mistress of the plantation. (2)

Among the dilapidated outbuildings, now threatened with demolition, owing to their rickety condition, are two brick ice houses, one round and one octagonal, adjoining each other, the stables for horses and cattle, long sheds for the curing and smoking of meats, the corn crib and other farm buildings. An orchard of fine trees, garden, pastures and fields for the crops extended more than thirty three acres. At the base of the hill, also part of Ruppert farm, a stretch of low ground where water collected washing down from the nearby ridges and hills was flooded, and when aided by a dam, made a practical and convenient ice pond. Boards were placed and when the water had frozen to six or eight inches, they were removed and the large cakes of ice were hauled up the hill to pack the upper chambers of the ice houses, which were kept filled by frequent additions of ice. Thus the racks and barrels of meat in the lower chambers were kept in good condition for the market. The runways were also underground. One of these ice houses is two stories and the other two and a half though the same height above ground. (3)

The name of the builder of this house is not known nor is there any record of the date of its construction and the first mention of this parcel of land in any record is that of the patent of the tract of 500 acres by Benjamin Haddock who called his estate "Haddock Hills". He received his patent from the Lord Proprietor of Maryland, dated June 10, 1685. (4) From this date until Anton Ruppert purchased it, the property changed hands a number of times. The farm brought different prices in its various sales, but the largest price ever paid for it was \$10,000.00 paid by Adam Diehl. He purchased it from Dr. Charles Nichols, the First Superintendent of the Government Hospital for the Insane, who was appointed to that position by President Fillmore. The following people have owned the place at various times and for varying lengths of time. The records of the transactions may be found in the

(2) J. C. Proctor, "The Ruppert Place", Washington Star, November 29, 1931.

(3) Mrs. Elizabeth McQueenie, 1925 Bladensburg Road, a relative of the Rupperts -- by personal interview.

(4) Col. Hist. Soc. Rec. -- Vol. 35, 36, pp.114-119.

office of the Recorder of Deeds under the Liber and folio numbers given with each transaction.

Although there appeared to be some transaction between Ninian Beall and Richard Queen which indicated an exchange of a part of the land that later formed the Ruppert tract, the earliest definite record of a sale seems to be between William Murdock and Jonathan Slater, April 8, 1793, Liber A 222.

Jonathan Slater to David Slater -- date missing, Liber B-642.

David and Sarah Slater to Thomas Contee, Ap. 14, 1803, Liber I 273.

Thomas Contee to Sarah Slater, May 3, 1803. Liber I folio 308.

David and Sarah Slater to James Clerklee, May 14, 1808 Liber I folio 330.

James Clerklee to Alexander Forrest, Sept. 23, 1812 Liber missing from shelf.

Andrew Forrest inheritance -- father and sister, Dec. 27, 1833.

Edward Dyer with Ernestus Guttschick to Elizabeth Dyer, March 30, 1844, W B 107-66.

George Washington Bowie conveyed to Henriette Dyer, executrix of Edmund Dyer, March 11, 1851 J. A. S. 22-205.

Charles H. Nichols to Adam Diehl, Dec. 29, 1863 N C T, 50-298.

Adam Diehl to John Diehl, November 4, 1864, N C T 22, 462.

This record is from the office of the Columbia Title Company through the courtesy of Mr. Becker, President.

The Ruppert farm is now the property of the United Brick Corporation, Bladensburg and New York Avenue.

Report by:

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Supplementing the preceding four pages, research at Upper Marlboro, Maryland by C. C. Magruder has disclosed two transactions in which this property figures. They are as follows:

William Thornton	Deed Nov. 4, 1775
to	Consid. 480 lbs. Md. Money
William Murdock	CC at 204

Conveys "all that part of a tract or parcel of land called Haddock's Hills lying and being in Prince George's County, beginning at a Bounded White Oak standing on the north side of the Eastern Branch it being the lowermost bounded tree of a tract of land called Seaman's Delight belonging to Benjamin Calvert and running thence at 28° W 473 perches then W.S.W. 96 perches, S. 26° 37' E. 476½ perches then with a straight line to the beginning containing 300 acres of land with all the buildings". Sarah, wife of William Thornton, joined in this deed.

William Murdock	Bond of Conveyance
to	Dec. 22, 1785
Jonathan Slater	Consid. 1500 lbs. Md. Money
	HH at 165

Condition of obligation is: that Wm. Murdock, his heirs or assigns, executors or administrators, convey by good and lawful deed and general warranty, to said Jonathan Slater: "All that plantation or parcel of land whereon Notley Jones, a tenant, now lives, being part of a tract of land called Haddock's Hills, lying in Prince George's County on the Northwest side of the Eastern Branch of Potomac River about three miles from Bladensburg, containing 300 acres which quantity of land I purchased of a certain William Thornton."

The property above mentioned is evidently 300 acres of the 500 acres patented by Benjamin Haddock. Buildings stood thereon in 1775, and ten years later one Notley Jones lived here as tenant of William Murdock. The house which stood here during this period was probably small and was evidently

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enlarged and refined by a later owner, probably ^{Alexander} Andrew Forrester, a man of wealth and position. The south part of the existing house (1936) bears architectural evidence of the early tenant house and the north part of an addition of c. 1815.

The location of the chimneys inside the house at the ridge line is interesting. Excavation at the ends of the older part would be helpful in establishing the plan of the original building. The roof also has unexplored and inaccessible portions which might, if uncovered, throw light on the history of the structure. Since the building is dilapidated and neglected, it is advisable to watch it closely so that further study can be carried on in case it is demolished.

DW

7/25/37